

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 ISO-00 AID-05 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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----- 041143

R 301845Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

SECSTATE WASHDC 3730

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 25697

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LA VN US

SUBJECT: SOUVANNA'S INTERVIEWS IN FRANCE

REF: VIENTIANE 8055

1. SOUVANNA'S INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN THE OCTOBER 10 QUOTIDIEN DE PARIS WAS POUCHED TO VIENTIANE OCTOBER 10. IF EMBASSY VIENTIANE HAS NOT YET RECEIVED THE FULL TEXT, PLEASE INFORM, AND WE SHALL SEND EXCERPTS.

2. SOUVANNA'S OCTOBER 16 INTERVIEW IN LA CROIX IS BEING POUCHED. TO ASSIST EMBASSY VIENTIANE, EXCERPTS ARE BEING CABLED SEPTEL.

3. SOUVANNA ALSO GAVE AN INTERVIEW TO CORRESPONDENT OF BBC AND FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW (EDITH LENARD). WE GATHER THAT FEER ARTICLE WILL APPEAR SHORTLY IF IT HAS NOT ALREADY BEEN PUBLISHED. LENARD HOPES TO DO ANOTHER BBC INTERVIEW BEFORE SOUVANNA'S DEPARTURE OCTOBER 31. LENARD SAID THAT WHEN SHE ASKED WHETHER SOUVANNA HAD HAD ANY SECRET NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE DRV ABOUT THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE NVA, SOUVANNA SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO SECRET NEGO-
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TIATIONS, BUT HE HAD MADE IT CLEAR TO THE DRV IN NO

UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT THEIR TROOPS MUST LEAVE.

4. WE FIND THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY SOUVANNA IN THESE INTERVIEWS TO BE BASICALLY THOSE HE HAS HELD FOR SOME TIME. HE HAS MADE NO SECRET THAT HE HOPES NVA WILL BE NO LONGER USED AGAINST LAO, AND BELIEVES ROUTES BUILT DIRECTLY ACROSS DMZ WILL MAKE THE USE OF LAO TERRITORY LESS IMPORTANT TO DRV. HOWEVER, HE IS READY TO ACCEPT CONTINUED NVA PRESENCE IN THE MOUNTAINS, A PRESENCE WHICH LAOS HAS NOT THE FORCE TO PREVENT. SOUVANNA'S CRITICISM OF THIEU AND WHAT SOUVANNA SEES AS THE ERRONEOUS "EXTERMINATION" POLICY THE GVN HAS ADOPTED IS WELL KNOWN, AND WE BELIEVE HE HAS EXPRESSED SUCH VIEWS INFORMALLY TO THE PRESS BEFORE. WHILE SOUVANNA SAYS THAT ONE MUST ACCEPT THE FACT THAT THE PRG EXISTS, HE DOES NOT INDICATE THAT HE WILL FAVOR ITS RECOGNITION AS A GOVERNMENT. SOUVANNA'S HOPE THAT THE PRC WILL EXERT A RESTRAINING INFLUENCE ON "ITS ALLIES" FOLLOWS PREVIOUS SIMILAR EXPRESSIONS. SOUVANNA HAS ALSO EXPRESSED HIS CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY TO WORK WITH SOUPHANOUVONG AND IN PHOUMI VONGVICHIT'S NATIONALISM. IN HIS STATEMENT ABOUT THE CONTINUATION OF US AID, SOUVANNA NOTED THE LPF DESIRE THAT THE AID CONTINUE AND UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO THE MESSAGES FROM PRESIDENT FORD AND FROM SECRETARY KISSINGER.

5. HENCE, AS SEEN FROM HERE, SOUVANNA'S INTERVIEWS HAVE PRESENTED BASICALLY THE "NEUTRAL" POSITIONS FOR WHICH HE IS KNOWN, VIEWS NOT DESIGNED TO WIN APPROVAL FROM EITHER SAIGON OR VIENTIANE "RIGHTISTS." (OPEN PERSONAL CRITICISM OF SISOUK--HOWEVER DELICATE AND AVUNCULAR --IS PERHAPS SOMEWHAT NEW.)

6. PERHAPS THE LENGTH OF SOUVANNA'S CONVALESCENCE HAS ATTENUATED SOMEWHAT HIS SENSE OF THE POLITIC, SINCE THE DIRECT CRITICISM OF THIEU IS PERHAPS A BIT MORE BLUNT THAN PREVIOUS QUOTES AND DOES OPEN SOUVANNA TO CRITICISM OF INTERFERENCE IN GVN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. WHILE GVN HAS NO DOUBT GROUNDS TO PROTEST, WE BELIEVE THAT US SHOULD NOT JOIN IN. GIVEN SOUVANNA'S STILL VERY LIMITED RECOVERY, HIS STRENGTH SHOULD BE SAVED FOR MORE IMPORTANT

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MATTERS THAN SOME SLIGHTLY UNGUARDED REMARKS MADE FROM THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE OF PARIS.
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